



DEVAL L. PATRICK
GOVERNOR

TIMOTHY P. MURRAY
LT. GOVERNOR

KEVIN M. BURKE
SECRETARY

The Commonwealth of Massachusetts
Executive Office of Public Safety and Security
Department of Fire Services

P.O. Box 1025 ~ State Road

Stow, Massachusetts 01775

(978) 567~3100 Fax: (978) 567~3121



STEPHEN D. COAN
STATE FIRE MARSHAL

THOMAS P. LEONARD
DEPUTY STATE FIRE MARSHAL

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Contact: Donna Nelson (978) 567 - 3149

Today's Fire at Harvard Historical Society Building Deemed Accidental

State Fire Marshal Stephen D. Coan and Harvard Fire Chief Robert J. Mignard announced that today's fire at a building owned by the Harvard Historical Society, located at 215 Still River Road, formerly the Still River Baptist Church, was accidental.

"It appears that the vapors from paint remover were unintentionally ignited by a spark from either a sander or a nail," said State Fire Marshal Coan.

Coan said that investigators from the Office of the State Fire Marshal and the Harvard Fire and Police Departments discovered that painters were using chemical paint stripper on the side of the building's exterior. This was followed by the use of a sander to further strip the paint. It is believed that a spark from the sander or a nail ignited residual vapors from the chemical stripper, which ignited the fire.

Fire Chief Mignard stated that the fire was knocked down quickly and was under control in approximately one hour. He also acknowledged the excellent mutual aid effort as 9 surrounding fire departments (Ayer, Bolton, Boxboro, Clinton, Devens, Groton, Littleton, Lancaster, Stow) responded to assist. "As a result of the fire suppression effort, this historic landmark was saved, with damage limited to the attic and the exterior of the building," said Chief Mignard. No injuries were reported.